

From: [REDACTED]
To: <ACameron@cde.ca.gov>
Date: 12/8/2005 8:22:38 PM
Subject: CAHSEE Alternatives

Dear Amy Cameron,

As a parent of a highly successful high schooler as well as a middle school child who struggles with reading, written expression, memory, and executive function deficits, I respectfully request that the CDE seriously consider finding an alternative to the CAHSEE for determining whether or not learning disabled students and ESL students have absorbed the K-12 CA curriculum and can demonstrate that competence.

Our schools are spending much too much time on teaching our children how to take tests at the expense of time on how to think, how to recognize one's strengths and weaknesses and addressing deficits that are amenable to change and developing strengths to succeed in life.

Now struggling high school students are panicked about passing the CAHSEE instead of attending to the learning that is afforded them. These are our most vulnerable students, those for whom finding passion in learning and passion in life endeavors is most critical and those most at risk for life failure. Please, while determining a legitimate way for them to show competence at the high school graduation level, take the pressure off them for demonstrating test-taking abilities, which many will be unable to do, and give them a legitimate, alternative, rigorous, standards-based criteria for graduating this June 2006.

Many have spent 13 years in California public schools, advancing grade by grade with passing grades, arriving to the pinnacle of their public school career, and find themselves at risk of not graduating with their peers due to a single test. Most will not need test-taking talent to be successful in real life.

First, please find a realistic, fair way to deal with students who are already in the pipeline of graduation only to meet this kink. And, secondly, please make this kink in the long-haul a well-thought-out assessment that is correlated with research-based life-success as well as provide the K-12 classroom support to help these most vulnerable students get to where the state believes they need to be in order to demonstrate competence.

I am for high standards. I am against high-stakes tests as "proof" of competence.

[REDACTED]
Parent & Test-Taker Par Excellence